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THE WORLD CONFERENCE FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF QUESTIONS TOUCHING FAITH AND ORDER

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CHURCH UNITY OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

1913

Ἵνα πάντες ἓν ὦσι, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἓν ὦσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας.

Ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut credat mundus, quia tu me misisti.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

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A.D. 1913

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Please give name and address legibly, with any proper prefix or title, such as Reverend, Mrs., or Miss.

AT the General Convention of 1910 of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, held in Cincinnati, the following report was presented to the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies on October 19, 1910:

"THE Joint Committee to which was referred the following resolution offered in the House of Deputies by the Rev. W. T. Manning, D.D., of New York:

"RESOLVED, The House of Bishops concurring, That a Joint Committee, consisting of seven Bishops, seven Presbyters and seven Laymen, be appointed to take under advisement the promotion by this Church of a Conference following the general method of the World Missionary Conference, to be participated in by representatives of all Christian bodies throughout the world which accept our Lord JESUS CHRIST as God and Saviour, for the consideration of questions pertaining to the Faith and Order of the Church of Christ, and that said Committee, if it deem such a Conference feasible, shall report to this Convention;

have considered the same, and submit the following report, and recommend the immediate consideration and passage of the resolution appended to the report.

"Your Committee is of one mind. We believe that the time has now arrived when representatives of the whole family of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, may be willing to come together for the consideration of questions of Faith and Order. We believe, further, that all Christian Communions are in accord with us in our desire to lay aside self-will, and to put on the mind which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We would heed this call of the Spirit of God in all lowliness, and with singleness of purpose. We would place ourselves by the side of our fellow Christians, looking not only on our own things, but also on the things of others, convinced that our one hope of mutual understanding is in taking personal counsel together in the spirit of love and forbearance. It is our conviction that such a Conference for the purpose of study and discussion, without power to legislate or to adopt resolutions, is the next step toward unity.

"With grief for our aloofness in the past, and for other faults of pride and self-sufficiency, which make for schism; with loyalty to the truth as we see it, and with respect for the convictions of those who differ from us; holding the belief that the beginnings of unity are to

be found in the clear statement and full consideration of those things in which we differ, as well as of those things in which we are at one, we respectfully submit the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, There is to-day among all Christian people a growing desire for the fulfillment of Our Lord's prayer that all His disciples may be one; that the world may believe that God has sent Him:

"RESOLVED, The House of Bishops concurring, That a Joint Commission be appointed to bring about a Conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and that all Christian Communions throughout the world which confess our Lord JESUS CHRIST as God and Saviour be asked to unite with us in arranging for and conducting such a Conference. The Commission shall consist of seven Bishops, appointed by the Chairman of the House of Bishops, and seven Presbyters and seven Laymen, appointed by the President of the House of Deputies, and shall have power to add to its number and to fill any vacancies occurring before the next General Convention:

GEORGE W. PETERKIN	CHARLES N. LATHROP
BOYD VINCENT	WILLIAM M. CLARK
THOMAS F. GAILOR	B. TALBOT ROGERS
WILLIAM LAWRENCE	ROBERT H. GARDINER
CHARLES P. ANDERSON	GEORGE WHARTON PEPPER
REGINALD H. WELLER	BURTON MANSFIELD
CHARLES H. BRENT	EDWARD P. BAILEY
WILLIAM T. MANNING	FRANCIS L. STETSON
ALEXANDER MANN	H. D. W. ENGLISH
BEVERLY E. WARNER	W. A. ROBINSON
JOHN E. SULGER	*Joint Committee.*"

On October 19, 1910, the above resolution was adopted unanimously by both the House of Bishops and the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, and a Joint Commission was appointed to carry the resolution into effect.

JUST before the final adjournment of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, there was read and referred to the Joint Commission the following letter with its enclosure:

Boston, October 20, 1910

REV. RANDOLPH H. MCKIM, *President of the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, Protestant Episcopal Convention, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

MY DEAR SIR:

THE National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States at their convention being held in Boston have unanimously adopted the enclosed resolutions. In addition they have passed the following vote:

VOTED: *That in view of the possibility of fraternal discussion of Church Unity suggested by the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops in* 1908, *a special com-*

mission of five representatives be appointed to consider any overtures that may come to our denomination as a result of this Conference.

Will you not present these resolutions as adopted to the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church with the sentiments of our fellowship and cordial goodwill?

Yours very truly,

Encl. RAYMOND CALKINS

The following are the members of the Commission as appointed:

The REV. NEWMAN SMYTH, D.D., of New Haven.
The REV. RAYMOND CALKINS, D.D., of Portland.
The REV. S. H. WOODROW, D.D., of Washington.
Mr. C. H. GOWER of Michigan.
Mr. ELLIOTT S. MILLER of Iowa.

DRAFT OF REPORT OF COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

Tuesday, October 18, 1910, *p.m.*

WHEREAS, the last Lambeth Conference of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion, which was held in London in 1908, lifted up the ideal of Church unity in these words: "We must set before us the Church of Christ as He would have it, one spirit and one body, enriched with all those elements of divine truth which the separated communities of Christians now emphasize separately, strengthened by the interaction of all the gifts and graces which our divisions now hold asunder, filled with all the fullness of God. We dare not, in the name of peace, barter away those precious things of which we have been made stewards. Neither can we wish others to be unfaithful to trusts which they hold no less sacred. We must fix our eyes on the Church of the future, which is to be adorned with all the precious things, both theirs and ours. We must constantly desire not compromise, but comprehension, not uniformity, but unity."

AND WHEREAS, the Anglican Bishops further recommended that for this end conferences of ministers and laymen of different Christian bodies be held to promote a better mutual understanding; and we, on our part, would seek, as much as lieth in us, for the unity and peace of the whole household of faith; and, forgetting not that our forefathers, whose orderly ministry is our inheritance, were not willingly separatists, we would loyally contribute the precious things, of

which as Congregationalists we are stewards, to the Church of the future; therefore this Council would put on record its appreciation of the spirit and its concurrence in the purpose of this expression of the Lambeth Conference; and voice its earnest hope for closer fellowship with the Episcopal Church in Christian work and worship.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CHURCH UNITY OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES 1913

THE resolutions of our last National Council concerning possible conferences with the Protestant Episcopal Church reached the General Convention of that communion, which was then in session, just before their adjournment. They had then made their notable utterance proposing a World Conference on Questions of Faith and Order as a first step towards unity; our resolutions, which had been adopted independently without knowledge of their proceeding, were welcomed by them as an immediate and providential response to their own action, and were referred to the Commission which they had just appointed to bring about the proposed World Conference. Their Commission promptly invited us to enter into conference with them; and from that day until now we have been in continual correspondence and coöperation with them in relation to the great work of joint endeavor which they have initiated. Your committee has been entrusted with power to receive for consideration any overtures that might be made from the Episcopal Church; we accepted accordingly the invitation to coöperate with them in the preparatory work which they had undertaken, agreeing with them that any efforts to formulate definitive overtures between the Episcopal Church and the Congregationalists might well be deferred until this larger project of the World Conference shall have been brought to its fruition. We esteem it a reason for gratification on our part that the timely action of our National Council three years ago has thus enabled Congregationalists to take part in this far-sighted movement from its inception. We desire to bear witness to the breadth of view and nobleness of spirit which has uniformly characterized their counsels with us; in these conferences we have been lifted far and above the beaten controversial cross-ways where hitherto they and we occasionally may have met to exchange

passing salutations with one another, and to go further along our separate ways.

The necessity for patient and thorough preparation for the World Conference has been felt by all concerned, if we are to expect ultimate practical results from its convening; if it is not to issue merely in a Congress of Religion, illuminating perhaps for the moment differences of opinions, but bringing no practical agreement towards fulfillment. The hesitancies and delays, which have been unavoidable, have risen from no lack of genuine determination to follow to the end the way thus opened, lead where it may; but all have shared the anxiety to avoid any too hasty and possibly misleading steps at the outset. The beginnings already gained seem to us to be of the Lord, and they are marvelous in our eyes. Your committee would report as follows, first concerning the plan and method, secondly the results already attained, and the next steps now under advisement in this movement.

As to the method of procedure, it has been realized that we need to enter upon a series of preparatory conferences, and to organize a campaign of mutual education. It is desirable that small groups of representatives of different churches and views should be brought together at convenient centres for eirenic study of the problems that confront us, and our possible agreements. It is also desirable that for the helpful guidance of such efforts and for a better understanding of our differences and underlying unities of faith, impartial papers should be prepared by competent scholars and generally distributed. This important part of the work — the creating and bringing within popular reach an eirenical, interdenominational literature, such as modern Biblical and historical studies may supply — has hardly as yet been undertaken. It is generally recognized that the day of the polemical divine is now past; but continued and hopeful effort is required to assure people in general that the hour is coming and is now at hand for the makers of peace throughout all the churches, and that even this generation may receive the blessing of the children of God. From the indifference arising from what to many seems a too distant and millennial prospect, at this present critical time and opportunity,

the one people of God should be aroused by the call to unite our Christian forces to overcome the evil of the world.

Those who have been brought together in the initial development of this far-reaching purpose, before difficulties which hitherto have appeared insuperable, realize profoundly the need of great humility and mutual patience; they feel that the present supreme obligation of the reunion of the churches for the sake of the Christian civilization of the world requires of all communions a common confession of the sin of continued disunity and inefficiency. Each Protestant church may well make its own this noble declaration of a great Roman Catholic theologian of the last century: "The mutual confession of guilt must precede the feast of reconciliation." There will then naturally follow searching and open-minded inquiries into the things of vital spiritual value that may underlie our several beliefs and ecclesiastical polities, which should be conserved in the Church of the future. We are to learn what truths of approved worth to others we may receive, as well as what our history has given us to give to others. In this preparatory discipline each denomination is to learn what is perhaps the hardest ecclesiastical lesson,—how to receive as well as to give.

If we begin by determining what we must or will not give up, we shall at best attain only an empty compromise, but it will not be permitted us to enter into some rich comprehension. Not indeed without sacrificial spirit shall the peace of the churches be won; but the method of this new venture of faith in the hope of church unity is a positive and gracious method of both giving and receiving; so may "all the precious things, both theirs and ours," be gathered into the fellowship of Christ's Church. How long this preparatory season of conference and education shall be necessary before the ultimate convening of the World Conference, no one at present may say; the date for it has not been discussed. Not until all things seem ready shall the final invitations be sent forth to what we earnestly pray and devoutly trust may be a marriage supper of the Lamb and His Church such as hitherto neither we nor our fathers have dared to expect. While the World Conference is kept ever before us as the object of our endeavors, the limits of the present preparatory work are recognized by common

consent; it lies beyond the province of these Commissions to attempt to formulate any articles of union or to endorse any definite plan of interdenominational consolidation. All possible ways of mutual approach are to be kept open for discussion, and tentative suggestions may well become the subjects for friendly conferences; eventually the providence of God may work for us some great simplification of our differences and difficulties, plainer and better than any of us at first may have thought possible.

The steps in the way thus briefly indicated, which have already been taken, may be summarized as follows: The Episcopal Commission, shortly after its organization, set about the task of issuing invitations to other churches, with statements of its plan and scope. This necessarily consumed much time, involving extensive correspondence with representatives of different Christian bodies throughout the world. The extent of this task may be judged from the fact that over thirty thousand letters have been received at the secretary's office, more than six hundred thousand letters and leaflets have been printed and distributed, besides a large and painstaking correspondence between different members of the several Commissions. It is an interesting circumstance that after the responses from the Congregationalists and the Disciples, who simultaneously had appointed committees to seek for unity, the first response from the Anglican Church came from the Nippon Sei Kokwai (the Holy Catholic Church of Japan), and next from the Church of England in Australia. In this country the majority of denominations invited have now made favorable answers; the number of coöperating Commissions already appointed is about thirty. Before issuing invitations to the Nonconformist bodies in Great Britain, it was deemed desirable by the Episcopal Commission to secure first the assent and coöperation of the Church of England. This has now been obtained, and a large and very representative committee of the Church of England has been designated to represent that church and to be in readiness to confer with Nonconformists. Invitations have lately been issued to these latter bodies. On May 8, 1913, a decided step in advance was taken in the convening of an informal conference with the Episcopal Commission of representatives of other Commissions thus far appointed.

At this meeting a notable offer was made by the Episcopal Commission. They requested us to advise with them in sending a delegation to England to lay this matter before the Nonconformist bodies of Great Britain, and they generously offered to pay the expenses of the delegation. That is itself an act of peacemaking. The offer was accepted with grateful appreciation; and a delegation has been appointed who will go soon to England on this mission.

We quote from the report of the Episcopal Commission* their impression of this representative conference of the principal denominations in this country, as their words express likewise our own feeling of its significance. They say:

"Nothing could have been more encouraging than the spirit and temper of the gathering. There was deep realization of the difficulties with which this undertaking is confronted, but the spirit of the meeting was one of courage and hope, and of faith in the present power of God the Holy Spirit.

"Questions relating to the proposed conference were faced and discussed with the utmost candor, but throughout the day there was not one jarring note, nor was a word spoken in any spirit but that of Christian fellowship and concord. The spirit in this meeting was the Spirit of Him Who is able to make men to be of one mind in an house."

At this meeting the following resolution was adopted:

"*Resolved*, That an Advisory Committee be constituted, composed of one representative of each of the Commissions already appointed, to be chosen by each of said Commissions, to coöperate with the Executive Committee of the Episcopal Commission in promoting any preparation preliminary to the work of convening the World Conference.

"That the Commissions which may be appointed by other Communions be invited to appoint representatives on the Advisory Committee."

At the conclusion of the meeting the following minutes were adopted as expressive of the results reached in conference and not heretofore embodied in formal resolutions:

* This report may be obtained free from Robert H. Gardiner, Gardiner, Maine, U.S.A.

"1. That the true ideal of the World Conference is of a great meeting participated in by men of all Christian churches within the scope of the call, at which there shall be consideration not only of points of difference and agreement between Christians, but of the values of the various approximations of belief characteristic of the several churches.

"2. That while organic unity is the ideal which all Christians should have in their thoughts and prayers, yet the business of the Commissions is not to force any particular scheme of unity, but to promote the holding of such a conference as is above described.

"3. That in order that the World Conference may have a maximum value, the questions there to be considered shall be formulated in advance by committees of competent men representative of various schools of thought, these committees to be appointed at as early a date as is consistent with assurance that their truly representative character cannot be successfully challenged.

"4. That among the subjects for joint consideration by the Executive Committee of the Episcopal Commission and the General [Advisory] Committee appointed at this meeting are the following:

"*First.* What questions must be considered before it can be decided how the World Conference shall be convened, what its membership shall be, and when and where it shall assemble?

"*Second.* How such prior questions can best be considered and answered.

"*Third.* How the matters for consideration by the World Conference shall be ascertained and referred to the committees which are to study them, and how and when those committees shall be appointed."

A special report of this interesting and inspiring meeting will be published.*

A meeting of this Advisory Committee is to be held in November, to perfect measures for further progress during the coming year.

One encouraging by-product of this work should not be left unnoticed. At an early preliminary gathering of delegates of

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several denominations at the invitation of Dr. Manning, in the rectory of Trinity Church, New York, your committee met a committee on unity of the Church of the Disciples. As a result of subsequent correspondence a conference was held by us with that committee in April, 1911, in Brooklyn, New York. After a full discussion we came to the unanimous conclusion that there are no differences between us radical enough to prevent the consolidation of our local churches where such union is desirable; and in a joint letter a practical method of procedure for such union was set forth. Already several instances have been reported in which this has been accomplished with gratifying success. It seems a striking fact, a manifest providence, as it certainly was no forethought of ours, that this first fruit of the effort for mutual approachment of Episcopal and other communions should have proved the beginning of what we trust may become an affiliation which shall save much cost both of means and of men between the large body of the Disciples and Congregationalists. This good beginning was incidental to the work of this committee; its further prosecution should be referred to the existing Committee on Federation and Unity. We commend it to our churches and ministry as well as all other efforts for working agreements between churches of different denominations whenever desirable.

As Congregationalists we have justly been accustomed to find the reason for our denominational existence by recurring to some of the conditions of primitive Christianity and the comparative independence of the early churches before the full development of the monarchical episcopate. Recent historical researches into the origins of Christianity have led scholars to lay emphasis on the fact that the local congregations of believers regarded themselves as belonging to, and presentations or evidences of, the one people of God. In the recovery throughout all churches of the primitive Christian consciousness of the one people of God lies the hope and the power of the greater Christianity of this missionary age. Your committee, as a result of these past three years of conferences and hopeful preparation, are profoundly convinced that the opportunity is opening for this generation, and that the obligation rests upon us, of achieving a dynamic unity

of the churches of Christ. For the redemption of our home land, and for the sake of the Christian civilization of the world, a courageous faith is now called to greet this promise of the Lord.

The words now becoming familiar, "Not compromise, but comprehension; not uniformity, but unity," may well be our rallying cry. Intercommunion between all the disciples of Christ; fellowship in the faith which, through all the ages since Christ ascended, His Spirit has been showing in the mind of His Church; and a ministry in His Name so validated and attested in each communion of believers that without violence to the scruples of any it may prove acceptable to all, — these are among the objects to be sought for until they shall be attained in the fulfillment of the Lord's last prayer for the oneness of His disciples, that the world may believe on Him.

Your committee would endorse and commend to this Council these words from the report of the Episcopal Commission to their General Convention:*

"If Christians will gather together in small groups all over the world, giving themselves to fervent prayer and earnest effort for a better understanding of each other and for guidance into the fullest truth, prejudices will disappear, love will displace jealousy, and the desire for reunion will overcome all obstacles without compromise of truth. Reunion will never come as the result of negotiations between committees, however learned and saintly. To be effective, it must express the overwhelming desire of the members of the one Body of the one Lord. Doubtless those members of that Body, who do now rest from their labors, are rejoicing in a measure of unity which seemed to some of them, at least, while here on earth, impossible, if not even abhorrent. Let us strive to rise in some degree with them above the smoke of partisan conflicts which have so long and so greatly obscured the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

"The effort on behalf of this world-wide movement is helping to keep the thought of reunion before the minds of Christians everywhere; it is teaching people to think of reunion as something that is possible, and to be seriously considered; it is pro-

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posing the one step towards reunion that is practicable at the present time; and it is, we trust, serving steadily to increase the number of Christians of all names who are desiring and devoutly praying that the blessed hope of reunion may be actually realized. The time is ripe for such an effort as this. Never was there a day, since Christians became disunited, when the thought of reunion was so much in the hearts and minds of men as it is at this moment.

"In all communions, be they called Catholic or Protestant, the number is daily increasing of those who feel, and say, that the present estrangements among those who believe in and worship the one Lord Christ are intolerable, and that they must cease.

"On all hands, believing men and women are realizing more and more keenly not only the weakness and the waste, but the wickedness, of our present divisions.

"After three years of work on behalf of this undertaking, we reaffirm, with a conviction which our whole experience has served only to deepen, the declaration made to the Convention of 1910, in the report as a result of which this Commission was appointed, 'that the time has now arrived when representatives of the whole family of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, may be willing to come together for the consideration of questions of Faith and Order.'

"We believe more firmly than ever, in the words of that report, 'that all Christian communions are in accord with us in our desire to lay aside self-will, and to put on the mind which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; and that our one hope of mutual understanding is in taking personal counsel together in the spirit of love and forbearance.'

"More strongly to-day than when this statement was made three years ago, it is 'our conviction that such a Conference for the purpose of study and discussion, without power to legislate, or to adopt resolutions, is the next step toward unity.'"

Your committee would recommend that this Council reaffirm the declarations of former National Councils concerning Church Unity; that it commend to the prayers, the sympathies, and the support of our churches and ministry the movement now in progress for a World Conference as a first step towards unity; and

that this committee be continued to confer and coöperate with similar Commissions from other churches engaging in this joint undertaking. As Congregationalists, with loyalty to the heritage of liberty which our fathers won at great cost, in fidelity to the ideal of the one catholic Church as declared in our historic confessions and declarations, with open minds and willing obedience to whatever in the urgencies and opportunities of these times may appear to us to be the leadings of the Spirit, we would fulfill our past, and meet in the future our obligation and part in proving what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God for the Church of Christ throughout the world.

Rev. Newman Smyth, *Chairman.*
Rev. Raymond Calkins.
Rev. Samuel H. Woodrow.
C. A. Gower.
Elliott S. Miller.